2: Teichman G-5 (1919) 1921 AF13 Northwest China AF13

valley narrows to a rocky gorge, and the cart track branches off towards P'ingfan. The mule trail through this defile, which is some 40 li in length, is a nightmare of a path, especially in wet weather, being very rough and narrow, ledged in the cliff side above the roaring waters of the Hsining River; two-thirds of the way through there is an opening and an inn, Yangchia Tientzu, where we had a welcome rest. From the eastern end of this gorge to Hsiangt'ang, the end of the stage, is a distance of ten li. The peculiarity of the valley in this neighbourhood is that the cultivated fields are entirely covered with large stones which are placed there on purpose, in order, we were told, to preserve the moisture in the ground. These stone-covered fields produce most excellent melons of various kinds, and the sight of the huge juicy fruit apparently growing out of bare stones is a remarkable one.

Just below Hsiangt'ang the Tatung River is crossed by a good wooden bridge at the point where it debouches from a defile in the mountains on to the valley of the Hsining River; it is here less than twenty yards wide, but very deep and rapid, and flows between almost perpendicular cliffs of rock; though it contains much the greater volume of water, it joins the Hsining River in the form of a tributary, issuing from a cleft in the mountains on to the open valley of the latter. From here the trail continues down the arid valley, being rough and stony most of the way, especially where it climbs in and out of side nullahs or ascends the face of the cliff. Fifty li out a ruined wall and fort are passed, barring the valley at a narrow point, and just before reaching the village of Hotsuitzu, the end of a stage of 75 li, the river washes the left-hand side of the valley, and the weary traveller is forced to follow a narrow footpath high up the face of the sandstone cliff; here a block of sandstone, becoming detached from higher up on the cliff and hurling itself into the torrent below, only missed by a few feet bringing the career of the principal member of the expedition to an abrupt termination. The valley round the village of Hotsuitzu is desolate in the extreme, bare red sandstone with a layer of yellow loess superimposed like icing on a cake. It is difficult to persuade oneself that this loess was not laid down by water. One of the arguments in favour

2: Teichman G-5 (1919) 1921 AF13 Northwest China AF13

of the aerial origin of the loess is the absence in it of fossil shells of water animals; but so far as I know such fossils are equally absent in re-deposited loess obviously laid down by water. If the great rivers of South America have deposited the soils of the Argentine pampas, there seems little reason to doubt that the Yellow River has done the same for North China. The desert mountains round the lower end of the Hsining River valley are rich in copper, and before the Revolution a mine was being worked in the neighbourhood with the assistance of a foreign engineer and foreign machinery; it appears to have suffered the fate common to all Chinese official enterprises of this nature, but its failure was not, so far as I am aware, due to any deficiency in the quality or quantity of the ore.

From Hotsuitzu the road continues down the valley which debouches on to the Yellow River 55 li further on. The latter can be crossed by a ferry here, but the path usually followed ascends through a desolate defile past a number of salt pans to a loess plateau, whence it descends to a ferry. The Yellow River is here some 200 yards wide and is crossed by means of a large ferry-boat taking animals. A further hour's march down the Yellow River valley through irrigated fields brings one to the township of Hsin Ch'eng, the end of a stage of 75 li.

From Hsin Ch'eng to Lanchou Fu is a march of 70 li by a good road down the valley through fertile irrigated fields backed by desert hills. This stage can be accomplished rapidly and easily by taking passage on one of the small skin rafts, numbers of which descend the river in the month of August laden with water melons for the Lanchou market. These rafts, composed of a light framework resting on a few inflated skins, are usually small enough and light enough to be carried back up stream on the shoulders of their owners. We were fortunate in striking the valleys above Lanchou during the height of the melon season. The dry heat in these arid valleys at that time of the year was at times truly terrific, and the melons, of which we consumed large quantities on the road, were delicious. The best melons in China are grown in this neighbourhood. We found four varieties; the *tsui kua* and the *hsiang kua*, small and very fragrant sweet melons; the *hsi kua*, the ordinary

2: Teichman G-5 (1919) 1921 AF13 Northwest China AF13

244 water melon, here grown to perfection, not the insipid watery pulp it is in many provinces, but a huge mass of juicy fruit of the most delicate flavour; and the *ta kua*, a tasteless variety fed to sheep and goats, and grown for its seeds. We were told that there is only one other melon which can compete with those of Lanchou for juiciness and delicacy of flavour, and that is the *Hami kua*, from Hami in Turkestan.

487 Our round tou of North-Western Kansu, *via* Liangchou, Chenfan, Êpo, and Hsining, a distance of about 700 miles, had occupied a little more than a month.

3:Cable & French M-5 (1926) 1927
AF13 Northwest China AF13

609 596 The mother's parting threat to her son, when he left the house, was expressed in these words: 'The day you join that Church you may order my coffin, for I will not live to endure such a disgrace.' His answer was: 'There is a way of life and a way of death. If you *must* choose the way of death, I shall mourn for you. But as for me, my path is that of Life.'

799 212 871 On our next visit to Fuyi we were the guests of the Mandarin for seventeen days, during which time, at his request, we gave instruction in Phonetic Script to both boys' and girls' schools. Although the town is small, the schools are important, and supply a number of students to the Provincial College at Lanchow. This visit afforded us the opportunity, under particularly happy conditions, to hold evangelistic services for children and for adults. The first Christian worship in Fuyi was led by Mr. Tu, whose name was in the mouth of every man of the neighbourhood. 'What *shall* we see next?' they said. 'Tu ru tao has joined the Christians!'

CHAPTER XV

NEARING SUCHOW

241 THAT same evening we left Fuyi for the city of Kaotai, which is the next important centre between Suchow and Kanchow. The fertility of this district can be judged by the daily market, where splendid vegetables of every description are for sale. This was the melon season, and half-a-dozen varieties of excellent quality were displayed in abundance. In view of the lean days to come, we stocked ourselves well with them, as also with carrots, celery, potatoes, egg-plant, and, for the

3:Cable & French M-5 (1926) 1927
AF13 Northwest China AF13

first time, foreign onions, which were large and of a very good quality. Homespun cotton materials were also to be bought, as this district,[1] unlike many others, produces a very fair cotton crop, which the men spin, and weave by hand on primitive looms. Kaotai also supplies a very superior kind of anthracite, which when burnt in a brazier is practically smokeless, giving off intense heat for hours; its fumes, however, are unpleasant to those unaccustomed to them.

From Kaotai there are two roads to Suchow, used alternately according to the season of the year; we took on this occasion the upper one following the foot of the Richthofen Range, where, between the oases, tracts of coarse gritty sand are found overlaid with small black pebbles, which presented an excellent and firm surface for our carts.

The first stage in this direction brought us to the ruined city of Camel-Town, an ancient settlement, dating from the time when North-West Kansu was under the sway of great Mongolian chiefs. Tradition has it that this was the centre from which King To-lo, probably a ruler during the time of the Mongol supremacy which terminated about the middle of the fourteenth century, controlled his tribe.

This was the first of the large buried cities we had yet seen, and interested us greatly. The massive clay walls of the enclosure still stood, showing the extended area once inhabited, but now the only building not completely ruined was a temple, with a lean-to of one room, in which lived an old man and his wife. It was an isolated spot, bearing a bad name for brigandage, and no carter spends the night there willingly. We had arrived late in the afternoon, having started early in the morning, so we had declared our fixed determination to get a night's rest here at any price. While

[1] [Kaotai -- Analyst]

3:Cable & French M-5 (1926) 1927 AF13 Northwest China AF13
~~Sinkiang AI-1~~

shied in terror at something none of us could see, but which the carter found to be the carcase of a camel. For hours we progressed in this valley[1] of desolation, and about 2 a.m. emerged into a small patch of watered land, where a few families cultivated melons. We do not like these watered lands in the darkness. Deep ditches are dug in all directions to convey the stream of water, sometimes to one part of the land, and sometimes to another. In and out of the dry ditches the cart bumped and stuck, whilst the animals strained at the high banks. Often the ditch was full of water, and this was worse, as through these rivers of uncertain depths the cart must go, and the experience is nerve-racking.

Before long, the barking of fierce dogs (another of the night-terrors) was heard, and our driver stood behind his mules preparing his whip for a possible fight. The farmer, however, was friendly and hospitable. The young men of the household got up, chained the dogs, and gave us the freedom of the threshing-floor for the night, where we slept in our carts. Early in the morning we gathered the people together, and to their great delight held a gospel service with singing accompanied by the harmonium.

When we left, our hostess gave us a basketful of oil-buns—dough rolled into thin cakes and fried in linseed-oil—and we proceeded on our way, still chasing the elusive Hwahaitz. In three minutes we had left the watered land and were once more in Gobi. A group of five magnificent black vultures caught our attention. They were so huge and so statuesque in outline that it was not until our young men had used the field-glasses that they were convinced these were really living creatures and not a group of rocks. The head was quite bald, and the movement in walking resembled the

1 [Between Chikinpu and Hwahaitz--Analyst]

3:Cable & French M-5 (1926) 1927 AF13 Northwest China AF13
~~Sinkiang AI-1~~

kang, scratched by a nail in the grime of the wall, were the following lines :

'To-day we came to Ansichow ;
Midday to morn onward we go ;
All through the night carters' oil-bottles flow ;
Heat, hunger, thirst, cold I now truly know ;
The mere sight of a cart makes my courage sink low ! '

This gloomy poem referred, we knew only too well, to the next stage of the journey, spoken of by the carters as a 'thirty-mile march which, with luck might be accomplished in eighteen hours.' On the opposite wall some homesick traveller had also written :

'Tho' a man travels far, yet his heart bides at home,
'Tis the prospect of wealth that still urges him on.
But he looks for home joys when his hardships are past,
And his wife's well-trimmed lamp guides his feet back at last.'

From Ansi we entered on a period of twelve brackish water stages, and with this in view we bought some gourds as water-bottles, in addition to the aluminium flasks we always used for our personal supply, as well as a large zinc can given us by a Turki friend. There was still no fruit to be had, but cucumbers were plentiful. The Turki bakers, who formerly supplied us with excellent bread, had vanished. They were unable any longer to travel freely, and preferred returning to their own people in Turkestan. We, however, laid in good stocks of *kwo kwei*, so familiar to every traveller in Kansu. These are round loaves of bread, two inches thick, measuring two feet across, and are baked on a circular iron plate covered with an iron lid, beneath and above which straw is burnt, while the heat of the smouldering embers suffices to cook the loaf.

A few days were enough for rest and provisioning, and for the small repairs needed by the carts, then once